

MOLIÈRE AND THE PHYSICIAN.

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Boileau, the brilliant and outspoken critic of the French [344] Elizabethan Era, in a conversation with Louis XIV, informed the *Grand Monarque* that he considered Molière the greatest of French writers, whereat Louis the Great sneered. It was this same critic, who, on being asked his opinion of some stanzas written by the King, cleverly replied: "Sire, in all things are you successful. You had desired to write the worst poem in the world, and you have admirably fulfilled your wish." We know not what the scion of the Bourbons retorted, nor how he felt. That he took it coolly is really praiseworthy. It is no wonder that the French king, although he always felt a kindness for the great humorist, disagreed with Boileau. The son of an upholsterer, the man who so inimitably strutted on the stage personifying ludicrous personages, could not, in the opinion of Louis XIV, be the greatest *littérateur* in France.

Not only this monarch, but many wise men in later times, took issue with Boileau. Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine, La Rochefoucauld have all been given precedence over the man who has made the whole world laugh for several centuries. During life Molière suffered intensely from lack of appreciation by the populace and the nobility. Every courtier behaved superciliously toward the cleverest man in the court. He was very poor. Twice he was imprisoned because of lack of funds for the payment of certain debts that were incurred in his attempts to organize a theatre. The clergy were openly against him. The faculty of medicine was silent, because of impotency. At death he was refused consecrated burial, and only a mandate from Louis XIV secured for him religious rites at his funeral. He was interred on a rainy day. The beadle or sexton forgot to mark the grave wherein Molière was laid, so that even the last resting place of the greatest of French dramatists is not known.

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[344] All the sciences were at first feared and opposed. So was medicine. What we do not understand, we fear or ridicule. The physician as the expounder of the mysterious science of medicine has, in all ages, caused fear in the timid and has been the butt of criticism from the skeptics. Only a few who have understood have given the physician and his art their just honor and respect.

Molière was not of these. He understood, I firmly believe, the true value of medicine, but he was disgusted with the practice of it in the seventeenth century. When science is degraded to quackery, and when the physician pursues the methods of the charlatan, there is certain to arise a violent opposition to such flagrant ignorance and dishonesty. The dramas "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac," "The Flying Physician," "The Doctor in Spite of Himself," and "The Doctor in Love" were the direct outcome of a healthy dissatisfaction with a profession whose only claim to efficacy was that it had not changed since the days of Hippocrates and Galen, and which took more pride in black gowns and Latin gibberish than in diagnosis and prognosis. When it is said that Molière was feared by churchmen and physicians one has said enough against the reputation of the physicians of those days. A man who was so logical as to be against the clergy of the seventeenth century must have had enough cause for opposing the medical faculty of the time.

Jean Baptiste Poquelin was born in Paris in the month of January, 1622, six years after the death of the world's greatest dramatist in Stratford-upon-Avon. His father was an industrious and thrifty upholsterer. That the Poquelin family was well-to-do is to be seen from the inventory given in the will of Jean Baptiste's mother. She bequeathed silverware and goldware and certain diamonds to the members of her family, and left each of her children an inheritance of five thousand livres. The story extant that the future dramatist suffered from the tight-fistedness of his father is improbable. Doubtless his father with the usual bourgeois respect for gold, was dissatisfied with the tastes of his son. Nevertheless, he paid his son's debts and saw to it that the boy received an education above that of the average lad of the period.

When yet a boy, Jean Baptiste found his father's trade

distasteful. The attraction of the streets, where gay things [344] were to be seen, was more to him than the disgusting monotony of the upholsterer's shop, where success depended upon orderliness, punctuality and lacquey-like fawning upon noble customers. Molière was never punctual nor strictly orderly, and certainly he never could toady, and lacking these qualities there was naught in his ancestor's business to please him. The smell of glue in his father's shop could not satisfy the poet who loved the odors of sweet smelling flowers and the beauty of the fields and the sunshine and the forests.

The streets of Paris, though very narrow and very dirty in those days, were quite gay. Swashbuckling musketeers haughtily strutted about and were very happy in provoking duels. They fought for insults to the king or their regiment, or to prove the superiority of certain sweethearts, or for the honor of chastising peasants. It is said that the redoubtable [345] Cyrano de Bergerac, whom Rostand has made the hero of his best drama, fought a dozen times and killed ten adversaries in order to defend the honor of his own elephantine proboscis. Grisettes, wenches and quacks traversed all the thoroughfares, and accosted all passers-by who seemed capable of spending some sous. In certain main streets, it was especially interesting. In the rue de Pont Neuf, the comedians of the day used to perform for the benefit of the public. Here young Jean Baptiste was Bellerose and Mondory and Gros Guillaume, all famous artists of that time, who set the audiences roaring at their coarse jests and phantastic contortions. Here, also, he saw Guillot Gorju, the actor quack, who ridiculed *les médecins*, and whose sharp witticisms Molière incorporated later into his dramas.

At the age of fourteen Molière was sent to the Jesuit College at Clermont near Paris, where he associated with sons of the nobility. Here he undoubtedly saw Prince Armand de Conti who later became his patron. There is no evidence, however, that this prince ever so much as talked to the low born Poquelin. Little else is known of Molière's student life. He studied for some time under Gassendi. He especially admired Lucretius and Terence among the ancients and Rabelais among the moderns. He left the above named institution, after a course of study of several years, for the law school at Orleans,

[345] "where," as his enemy Le Boulanger de Chalussay has it, "any donkey could buy a diploma." However, he went to the law courts only once.

A tradition would have it that Molière studied for the priesthood, but this is wholly a fable, for the bright-witted, free-willed Molière could never brook a monkish life with its restrictions and monotony. Still, if he ever did intend to practice law or study theology, the purpose must have been more desultory than serious, for we find him in the month of January, 1643, fully embarked on the venturesome career of comedian and stage manager. (Chatfield-Taylor: *Life of Molière*.)

Travelling, actor-like, he fell in with the Béjart family, a strolling band of performers, and soon ingratiated himself in favor of Madeline Béjart whom he married. Aided by his sweetheart and the whole company, he opened "The Illustrious Theatre." This venture was a failure, and after being imprisoned twice for debt, Molière had to flee Paris to escape another incarceration in the debtor's jail. Together with his company he strolled over France and appeared in Bordeaux, Toulouse, Lyons, Orleans, Limoges, Narbonne and Pézenas at different periods, everywhere receiving permission to erect a stage to perform comedies.

Successively under the patronage of Duke D'Epéron and Prince de Conti, the fortunes of the poet began to flourish. In the provinces and in the capitol, Molière kept his eyes open and he himself began to ridicule the foibles and vanities of the average Parisian bourgeois. Soon dramatic works followed one another, and his fame reached the ears of the king, who from this time forward was quite a generous patron. During this period he wrote his greatest dramas, and, receiving protection from the king, he attacked the medical profession and medicine in general, with so much bitterness that as he had anticipated, the doctors refused to attend him in his last illness. He died on the seventeenth of February, 1673. "This same day, about ten o'clock at night, after the comedy, Monsieur de Molière died in his house, rue de Richelieu. He had played the part of the said *malade* (*Le Malade Imaginaire*) suffering from cold and inflammation which caused a violent cough. In the violence of the cough he burst

a vessel in his body, and did not live more than half an hour [345] or three-quarters after the bursting of the vessel." (La Grange: Register.)

To fully comprehend the causes that led Molière to wage a bitter warfare against medicine and the doctors, we must briefly review the medical history of the seventeenth century. Periods in which transpire changes from the accepted state of events and things are ever characterized by violence, satire and much bitterness. The seventeenth century is the transition era from mediæval irrationality and empiricism in medicine to modern scientific experimentation and rationality. In times of revolution, there are ultra-conservatives and ultra-radicals. The medical iconoclasts of the reign of Louis XIV were opposed by the unreasoning obstinacy of the Parisian medical faculty, who thought it a crime to venture out of the rut of prescribed practice. "Who shall judge when doctors disagree," is an old apothegm. The layman becomes puzzled and consults the quack, and the more strife and contention there is between the various schools of medicine, the more will quackery and dishonesty thrive. Between the violent radical and the obdurate conservative, the enlightened cool headed physician is lost sight of.

The practice of medicine in the seventeenth century was mere empiricism. The faculty was inculcated with the dignity of its profession, and laid much stress on the ceremonials of practice. The oath that a professor of medicine took when nominated is quite characteristic: "I here pronounce faithfully to teach in a long gown with wide sleeves, a doctoral cap on my head, a knot of scarlet ribbon on my shoulder." Nevertheless an epoch which could produce such men as Harvey, Sydenham, Malpighi, Willis and many other famous doctors whose names are almost household words, cannot be looked upon as a period of grotesque hypocrisy and profound ignorance. There must be another side to the matter, and the legend of the satirist must not be wholly taken for granted:

*Longue peruque, habit grotesque,
Affecter un air pédantesque,
Cracher du grec et du latin,
Tout cela réuni fait presque,
Ce qu'on appelle un médecin.*

- [345] Molière has tremendously exaggerated in the humorous episodes and the comic situations the true condition of his time. Disgusted as he was with science that was unable to cure his disease, (because no science could cure it), he sought aid amongst the quacks of the Pont Neuf; he consulted the town criers and the wandering mountebanks. If we examine the lives and works of leading physicians of Paris of the seventeenth century, we must inevitably come to the conclusion that
- [346] Molière's doctors, the Tomès, Desfonandrès, Macrotons, Bahis are mere burlesques. That they have survived such a long period is due to the fact that they are comical even if not true, and that in their conversation and behavior grains of realism may be discovered.

Molière was very well acquainted with the physicians of the court. Fagon was at that time the chief physician in attendance on the king, a position of great dignity and importance. Fagon occupied the chair of Botany in the *Jardin Royal*, and it was his endeavors and studies that added importance to the science of botany. He corresponded with the learned men of the whole world, and received from them rare botanical specimens which he stored in the *Jardin Royal*, making that institution the most famous museum in Europe. In the year 1665 he made the first catalog of this collection under the title of *Hortus Regius*. He was a most honest man. "His disinterestedness," says M. Fauvelle, "was as wonderful as his learning. He abolished the buying of offices in the learned colleges, and refused large sums of money that were offered him. His modesty was very great, and he always sought to avoid the honors that the faculty desired to confer on him. Compulsion was exerted to persuade him to accept his nomination to the *Academie des Sciences*."

Dr. Fagon's co-worker was Armand de Mauvillain, the friend of Molière. de Mauvillain was a physician of the Montpellier school, and, therefore, an enemy of the Parisian faculty. It has been surmised that this doctor gave a helping hand to Molière in writing the satires on Medicine. Receiving the degree in medicine from the University of Paris in 1648, he settled in the capital and had quite a lucrative practice. With the advance of the teachings of Harvey and Malpighi, he became an adherent of the theory of the circulation of the

blood. de Mauvillain was very learned and very liberal, and [346] the conservatives considered him the anti-Christ of medicine. "If he did not resemble the physicians in Molière's dramas," says Professor Funck-Brentano, "it was because he was Molière's physician himself; and this is enough ground for believing that de Mauvillain, powdered and perfumed as he was, served and abetted his poet friend in order to ridicule his beloved colleagues of the faculty." (Funck-Brentano: *Die Ärzte Molières.*)

The Parisian college was against all modernism. Like the Chinese, the doctors had built a wall of stone and adamant against the ingress of advanced thought. As Dr. M. J. Conklin remarks, the spirit of the times is happily shown in the following extract from the statutes of the Academy at Helmstadt:

We desire the medical art, even as it was rightly and wholly fixed and handed down, under the guidance of God, by the artists Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna, to be preserved and diffused by teaching. We recommend that all Empirics and the 'Tetralogies' of Paracelsus, with other corruptions of medicine not agreeable to the doctrines of Galen and Avicenne, be banished entirely from the academy.

This doctrine was a stumbling block to the progress of all science.

In the reigns of Francis II, Charles IX, Henry III, and Henry IV, the faculty was bitterly embroiled with Ambroise Paré. As Mr. Stephen Paget says "it was a sort of Holy War for the deliverance of surgery from the bondage of medicine."

In the year 1575 (April 22), Paré published his book, a folio of 945 pages, on surgery. It was written in French, so that even a plain mortal (one not begowned or becaped) could understand every word of it. The Faculty became alarmed. On July 9 of the same year, they met and besides observing that Paré was only a barber surgeon, thrust amongst them by the king, ignorant of Latin and Greek, they charged him with gross indecency and immorality. Five days later, Parliament called the case for hearing, and carrying the case to the end, decided that Paré had no legal right to publish a work on medicine without first receiving permission from the

[346] faculty. The defence of the eminent surgeon was quite a shaft of sarcasm against ignorant intolerance:

For more than thirty years I have been printing my treatises on surgery . . . which made me think, if I gathered them together, I should be doing a thing very agreeable to the public. Having accomplished it, and that at an expense past thinking—lo and behold—the physicians and the surgeons have set themselves to obscure and suppress them, for this sole reason, that I wrote in our mother tongue, in phrases quite easy to be understood. The physicians feared lest all who should get the book into their hands would be advised how to take care of themselves in time of sickness, and would not be at the pains to call them in. The surgeons were afraid lest the barbers, reading these, my works, would receive full instruction in all the operations of surgery, and would come to be as good as themselves and thus trespass on their domains.

When Paré planned to publish his *second* edition, he consulted the faculty, and in order to please them, he removed his obnoxious articles on fevers (which only physicians could write about) and included his observations on that subject in his discussion of tumors. This modesty and meekness pleased the “congregated college,” and they did not oppose the publication of this work. (S. Paget: Ambroise Paré and His Times.)

The faculty in the time of Louis XIV was the same in aspirations and ideas as the faculty in the times of the last Valois. Surgery was opposed because no dignified physician would hold a knife in his hand, and to elevate the barber to the dignity of a doctor was not to be thought of. Circulation of the blood was proscribed because it was English. If the blood did circulate it was against the laws of the faculty. It had no business to flow contrary to the beliefs of Hippocrates and Galen. “Besides,” said they, “if the blood circulates, it is useless to bleed, because the loss sustained by an organ will be immediately repaired, hence bleeding is useless, therefore the blood does not circulate.”

The prescribing of antimony was prohibited by the faculty at Paris, for the simple reason that the faculty of Montpellier highly recommended it. de Mauvillain espoused the cause of antimony and circulation of the blood and was, therefore, ostracized from the association of physicians.

As strict partisans of the principles of the Parisian faculty, [346] Jean Riolan (1577-1657) and Guy Patin (1601-1672), stand preëminent. Patin, "polemical medical man and clever humorist of that day," said of Riolan that he would rather give up a friend than an assertion. They were strict adher- [347] ents of the Iatro-chemical school, founded by Sylvius, "which like other systems, might rather be called a systemic phantasy." This system is based upon the elements of chemistry—the improved successor of alchemy and the first step toward true chemistry—; upon the new knowledge of the circulation of the blood; and upon the closer acquaintance with the chyle and lymph vessels (which had been acquired in this period), as well as upon the old doctrine of the "spiritus and the calor innatus" of the heart. His system, although its author always professes to accept only "experience by means of the senses, is constructed far less upon experience than upon false conclusions drawn from experimental observations, whose connection with his theory is on the whole arbitrary and forced." (J. H. Baas: *Geschichte der Medicin*.)

Opposed to their beliefs were the theories of the Iatro-mathematical school whose motto was, "In your practice, concern not yourselves with theories." The originator of this system was Santorio Santoro (1561-1636), Professor in Padua and Venice. Their idea was to treat all things with precision, and that all functions in the body were physical rather than chemical. "Thus digestion was referred to as a process of mechanical trituration, and the absorption of chyle was explained as due to the pressure arising from the action of the intestinal movements upon the comminuted food. In a similar way the secretions were referred to as the resistance created by the corners, curves, angles, etc., of the vascular system, and so on."

Guy Patin was a learned man, a brilliant writer and thoroughly acquainted with the Latin language, which he wrote to perfection. "His creed contained but two articles—bleeding and purging with Senna." Certainly he was not a quack, but with mediæval intolerance he opposed all who were against the existing order of things. It might have been of him that Molière has said "that a dead man is only a dead man, and is of no consequence, but a neglected formality does

[347] great harm to the entire profession." Guy Patin strongly believed in having his patients die "according to rule rather than to recover in violation of it."

Molière ridiculed all physicians and all medicine. He had no more respect for the "outside doctor"—him of Montpellier—than he had for the members of the Parisian faculty. He was especially venomous against the medical profession because of their seeming ignorance and lack of skill. Suffering as he did from a painful disease he became morose and disgusted with the futility of prescriptions. Whether it was aneurysm of the aorta or pulmonary tuberculosis, as has been surmised by some, in any case, accompanied as it was by hypochondriasis, it was sufficient to especially interest him in the medical factions of his day. He ridiculed all of them impartially.

Molière's dramas against medicine began in his "barn storming" days. "The Flying Physician" and "The Physician in Love" are two plays of inferior quality written by the dramatist at the very beginning of his career. The latter drama is lost. In *Le Médecin Volant* we find Molière's first attack on medicine. Sganarelle, the famous rogue, undertakes to impersonate a learned physician, in order to aid his master in his love affair. He assumes the doctor's gown and talks with the pedantic air, which Molière thought was characteristic of the physician:

Hippocrates says, and Galen, by undoubted arguments, demonstrates that a person is not in good health when he is ill. You are wise to place all your hope in me; for I am the greatest, the noblest, the most learned physician in vegetable, sensitive and mineral faculty.

Unlike other physicians he not only looks at the urine but also tastes it, but like them he is a stickler for formality. Upon being told his patient is dying, he exclaimed:

Ah! let her be careful not to do so; she must not amuse herself by allowing herself to die without a prescription from the doctor.

This last remark, the author was very fond of repeating, and we find it again in 'The Physician in Spite of Himself.'

In another of his farces "The Jealousy of Le Barbouillé" written during his provincial career the doctor is still more

ridiculed. Le Barbouillé is plagued by a shrewish wife, who, [347] as fate would have it, always gets the upper hand of him. The unfortunate husband seeks advice from a doctor, and like a good business man, accosts the physician and immediately comes to the point:

Le B: "I desire to beg for an opinion on a question of great importance to me."

The doctor, ever wakeful to the danger of losing his dignity, replies in what he endeavors to make a very reproving statement:

You must be very ill bred, very loutish and very badly taught, to speak to me in that fashion, without first taking off your hat, without observing *rationem loci, temporis et personæ*. What! You begin by an abrupt speech, instead of saying *Salve, vel salvus sis, doctor doctorum eruditissime*. What do you take me for, eh?

No apologies will help. In endeavoring to excuse himself, poor Le Barbouillé gets more entangled. What astounds him most is that the doctor does not care for money. "Well, I made a mistake," he soliloquizes puzzled. "Seeing him dressed as a doctor, I felt that of necessity I must speak of money to him, but since he does not want any, nothing can be more easy than to satisfy him." The doctor is a very verbose individual who is continually advising his hearers to be brief. The stage direction in the seventh scene is interesting:

All wish to explain the cause of the quarrel: The doctor explains that peace is a fine thing. They all talk together, and make a dreadful noise. In the midst of all this Le Barbouillé ties the doctor by the legs with a rope, throws him down on his back, and drags him away. The doctor goes on talking all the time, and counts all his arguments on his fingers, as if he were not on the ground.

Molière took a general interest in the educational affairs of France. In *Le Mariage Forcé* he throws a shaft at the University of Paris, which was endeavoring to persuade Parliament to confirm a sentence dated Sept. 4, 1624, which condemned to death all those who would dare to attack the Aristotelian doctrine.

Sganarelle meets two philosophers discussing and quarrelling. He accosts one, and is met with gibberish that he does not understand. "Devil take the scholars," he exclaims. [348]

[348] "They will never listen to anybody. I see it was the truth I was told and that this Master Aristotle was a talker, and nothing else."

The doctor has a very good opinion of himself.

Get along, you are more impertinent than the fellow who maintained that we ought to say the *form* of a hat instead of a *figure*, and I will prove it to you at this time, by the help of demonstrative and convincing reasons, and by arguments *in Barbara*, that you are and never will be anything but a simpleton and that I am and ever shall be, *in utroque jure*, the Doctor Pancrace. . . . A man of sufficiency, a man of capacity, a man finished in all the sciences, natural, moral, and political. A savant, savantissime, *per omnes modos et casus*. A man who has a knowledge suptrative of fables, mythologies, and histories; grammar, poetry, rhetoric, dialectics, and sophistry; mathematics, arithmetic, optics, ornieritics, physics and metaphysics; cosmometry, geometry, architecture, specular, and speculative sciences, medicine, astronomy, astrology, physiognomy, meteposcopy, chromancy, geomancy.

The doctor gets out of breath naming all these true and pseudo branches of learning. He is very intolerant of a diverse opinion, and would condemn anyone to the galleys or scaffold for contradicting him.

Molière ever attacks vice, undauntedly, uncompromisingly. He seems to fear to be too lenient with corruptions, lest he himself become indifferent. Pope well puts it:

Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
That to be hated needs but to be seen,
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

—*Essay on Man*.

Not all the doctors of Molière are so indifferent in money matters as is the savant Pancrace of *Le Mariage Forcé*. In fact, the humorist rarely imagined a physician who was not absorbed in money making. He is not harsh with weaklings and sinners. He laughs at them heartily, and he expects us not to condemn his Sganarelles and Gros-Rcnés and Mascarilles. It is true that they are deep-dyed rogues but he smiles at their escapades and is very lenient with their delinquencies. Not so with the physicians and savants. There always seems to be something rankling in his heart against

these learned men. He considered them hypocrites, fools, [348] and villains. Humorist though he was, he never kept his sense of humor in dealing with doctors. Molière's suave and witty testimony cannot be accepted before a court of justice. Molière does not bear true witness.

Critics and editors of Molière always feel themselves called upon to defend the dramatist for his attacks on the doctors. Mr. Chatfield-Taylor in his admirable biography devotes a whole chapter to the strife between Molière and the faculty, and he covertly sneers at the College of Medicine, who, when they congregated, resembled more an assembly of Roman Senators than a meeting of French scientists. Professor Charles Heron Wall in his introduction to *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* finds it necessary to state that "the attacks upon the doctors are not exaggerated." In their endeavor to defend the critics become partial and unjust.

Monsieur de Pourceaugnac is perhaps the best farce ever written, and Molière did not feel called upon to do anything but cause uproarious laughter. He does not attempt to amuse us with the sharp witticism of the comedian; instead, he employs the broad humor and crude jests of the clown.

M. de Pourceaugnac, a lawyer from Limoges, has come to Paris to marry Julia the daughter of Oronte. He is unacquainted with Paris and is easily led astray. Julia does not feel inclined to obey her father, and her affections are centered upon Eraste, a young fashionable gentleman. In order to circumvent the meeting between Pourceaugnac and Oronte, Serigani the servant of Éraсте persuades the unfortunate countryman to place reliance on Éraсте and himself. Unsuspecting, he is conducted to two physicians, who readily believe Serigani that Pourceaugnac is insane, and ignoring the wretched man's protestations, they argue and debate in their usual pedantic style over the malady of their patient. The consultation between the doctors is extremely witty. After the senior physician has given a very lengthy and laughingly learned discussion of the case, the junior doctor, in rapt admiration, replies:

Heaven forbid, Sir, that it should enter my thoughts to add anything to what you have just been saying. You have dis-

[348] coursed too well on all the signs, symptoms and causes of this gentleman's disease. The arguments you have used are so learned and so delicate that it is impossible that he is not insane and hypochondrically melancholic; or were he not, that he ought to become so, because of the beauty of the things you have spoken and of the justness of your reasoning. Yes, sir, you have graphically depicted, *graphice depinxisti*, everything that appertains to this disease. Nothing can be more learnedly, judiciously and ingeniously conceived, thought, imagined than that you have delivered on the subject of this disease either as regards the diagnostic, the prognostic or the therapeutic, and nothing remains for me to do but to congratulate this gentleman upon falling into your hands. All I should like to add is to let all his bleedings and purgings be of an odd number, *numero deus in pare gaudet*, to take the whey before the bath, and to make him a forehead plaster, in the composition of which there should be salt—salt is the symbol of wisdom.

There is one thing about this comedy that is gratifying to the doctors and this is that Molière as pointedly attacks the lawyers as he does the physicians. In fact, he ridicules the men of law more than he does the practitioners of medicine. They have a refrain which they are constantly reciting:

Your deed
Is plain and clear
And all the gear
Of wigs and law
Upon this flaw
One verdict bear
Polygamy's a case, you find,
A case of hanging.

Only one man who was not a doctor took up arms in defense of the medical faculty. Le Boulanger de Chalussay wrote a comedy entitled *Élomire Hypochondre, ou Les Médecins Vengés* in which he ridiculed Molière (Élomire) and his wife, and represents the doctors as learned men who take vengeance on the mortal who has dared to attack the dignity of the most [349] ancient and honorable profession. The play produced a great furor, and the conservatives were extravagant in its appreciation.

Unto death Molière despised physicians. His last comedy, *Le Malade Imaginaire*, was written at a time when he was very ill and nearly dying. Molière himself acted the part of

Argan, the imaginary invalid. This drama is very laughable. [349]
The story is very simple. Argan, the imaginary invalid, is constantly employing a physician to prescribe for him. As his second wife says, "He is a wretch, unpleasant to everybody, of nauseous dirty habits, always a clyster or a dose of physic in his body." His wife pretends great affection and diplomatically so manages affairs that her husband should make his will in her favor, thus dispossessing her step-daughter Angélique. Her plan would have been successful but for Toinette the maid of the intended victim. Argan, desiring to reduce his doctor's bills, hits upon the remarkable scheme of marrying his daughter (who is in love with a young, handsome gentleman) to his physician's son.

The curtain rises upon Argan sitting alone and adding up his apothecary's bill.

Item, on the 24th, a small insinulative clyster, preparative and gentle, to soften, moisten and refresh the bowels of Mr. Argan—thirty sous.

Item, on the said day in the evening, a julep, hepatic, soporiferous, and somniferous, intended to promote the sleep of Mr. Argan—thirty-five sous.

Item, on the 26th, a carminative clyster to cure the flatulence of Mr. Argan.—thirty sous.

And more, and still more. A goodly list and quite lucrative for the medical man in this case.

When the intended son-in-law, who is to receive his doctor's degree in three days, comes to visit the Argan family, he proves positively that he is invested with great learning. He mistakes the step-mother for Angélique and pays her compliments intended for his belamour. His father, Doctor Diafoirus, is constantly prompting him as to good manners and fashionable etiquette. His father, in praising him, says:

"In all disputations has he rendered himself formidable, and no debate passes but he goes and argues loudly and to the last extreme on the opposite side. He is firm in dispute, strong as a Turk in his principles, never changes his opinion, and pursues an argument to the last recesses of logic. . . . But, above all, what pleases me most is his blind attachment to the principles of the ancients, and that he would *never listen* to the pretended discoveries of our century concerning circulation of the blood and other opinions of the same stamp."

[349] In other words, asinine obstinacy is the marked characteristic of the future practitioner. In reading these lines we are reminded of the famous hero of Butler's panegyric on Puritanism. Hudibras, likewise, was strong in debate:

He was in logic a great critic,
Profoundly skilled in analytic;
He could distinguish and divide
A hair 'twixt south and southwest side;
On either which he would dispute,
Confute, change hands, and still confute.
He'd undertake to prove by force
Of argument, a man's no horse;
He's proved a buzzard is no fowl,
And that a lord may be an owl;
A calf an alderman, a goose a justice,
And rooks, committeemen and trustees.
He'd run in debt by disputation.
And pay with ratiocination,
All this in syllogism true,
In mood and figure, he would do.

(Hudibras, Part I, Canto I.)

The young doctor is very gallant. He graciously invites his lady-love to amuse herself by assisting at the dissection of a woman upon whose body he is to give lectures; a new and improved method of gratifying the desire for fun in a young girl!

Once M. Argan refuses to take a prescription of his physician. The latter does not seem at all pleased about it:

What daring boldness; what a strange revolt of a patient against his doctor! A clyster which I have had the pleasure of composing myself, invented and made up according to all the rules of art. A case of high treason against the faculty.

The final scene is an interlude representing the admission of a student to the degree of doctor of medicine. The scholars and professors recite a piece composed of dog-Latin and French praising medicine, and in a burlesque manner they march on the stage with clysters and bleeding pails. Their refrain is:

*Clysterium donare,
Postea seignare,
Ensuita purgare.*

Really not a bad remedy for all diseases.

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Like Rabelais before him, Molière always makes us laugh, but more than that he makes us think. Undaunted, he stood alone and battled with those in authority. Their endeavors to harm him proved fruitless and he escaped unscathed. Undoubtedly Molière had great influence upon his contemporaries and we notice great improvement in the proceedings of the Medical Faculty in the early part of the eighteenth century. We should not consider Molière as an enemy of medicine, but as a critic of the ignorance and intolerance of the medical practitioners.

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